



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

# The Writing Center

## Transitions

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# What is a transition?

Transitions are words, phrases, sentences or even paragraphs that relate ideas and help guide the reader from one idea to another. In moving from one topic to the next, a writer has to bring the reader along by showing how the ideas are developing. A clear purpose, strong ideas, and logical development aid in coherence, but to ensure that the reader is following along; good writers provide signals, or transitions.

# Make Paragraphs Flow

A paragraph has coherence- or it flows- if its details fit together clearly in a way that readers can easily follow. When you arrange information in a particular order, you help readers move from one point to another. Regardless of your organization, however, be aware of several transitional devices to achieve paragraph coherence.

- Repeating Key words and phrases
- Using Parallelism
- Using Transitions

# Repeating Key Words and Phrases

- Repeating or restating key words help make a paragraph coherent and also reminds readers what the topic is.
- **Example:**

Perhaps the simplest fact about sleep is that individual needs for it vary widely. Most adults sleep between seven and nine hours, but occasionally people turn up who need twelve hours or so, while some rare types can get by on three or four. Rarest of all are those legendary types who require almost no sleep at all.

# Parallelism

- Parallelism helps tie sentences together and can help connect sentences within a paragraph.
- **Example:**

William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" tells the story of a young boy trapped in a no-win situation. If he betrays his father, he loses his family. If he betrays justice, he becomes a fugitive. In trying to free himself from his trap, he does both.



# Transitional Words and Phrases



Transitions are words such as so, however, and thus that signal relationships between sentences and paragraphs. Transitional words and phrases help guide the reader from one idea to another. To understand how important transitions are in directing readers, try reading the following paragraph with all transitions removed.

# A Paragraph With No Transitions

In “The Fly,” Katherine Mansfield tries to show us the real personality of the boss beneath his exterior. The fly helps her to portray this real self. The boss goes through a rage of emotions and feelings. He expresses these feelings to a small but determined fly, whom the reader realizes he unconsciously relates to his son. The author basically splits up the story into three parts, with the boss's emotions and actions changing quite measurably with old Woodfield, with himself, and with the fly, we see the boss's manipulateness. Our understanding of him as a hard and cruel man grows

# The Same Paragraph with Transitions

In “The Fly,” Katherine Mansfield tries to show us the real personality of the boss beneath his exterior. The fly in the story’s title helps her to portray this real self. In the course of the story, the boss goes through a range of emotions. At the end, he finally expresses these feelings to a small but determined fly, whom the reader realizes unconsciously relates to his son. To accomplish her goal, the author basically splits the story into three parts, with the boss’s emotions and actions changing measurably throughout. First with Old Woodfield, then with himself, and last with the fly, we see the boss’s manipulateness. With each part, our understanding of him as hard and cruel man grows.



# Commonly used transitions

- To signal sequence
  - Again, also, and, then, besides, finally, first, second, third, furthermore
- To signal time
  - After a few days, after a while, afterward, simultaneously, meanwhile
- To signal comparison
  - Again also, in the same way, likewise, once more, similarly
- To signal contrast
  - Although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of
- To signal Examples
  - After all, for example,, for instance, indeed, in fact, of course, such as
- To signal Cause and Effect
  - Accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose
- To signal place
  - Above, adjacent to, below, beyond, closer to, elsewhere, farther on
- To signal concession
  - although it is true that, granted that, naturally, of course
- To signal summary, repetition, or conclusion
  - As a result, as has been noted, in any event, therefore, to summarize

# All Information Obtained From:



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Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

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